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Jeff Johnson

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Knowing and Saying We Know

In these pages I want to resurrect a dispute that has, sadly I think, now gone by the wayside in current thinking about knowledge, among other things. I mean the dispute that we find Wittgenstein entertaining in certain sections of *On Certainty*¹ and the dispute that lead John Searle to argue that there is such a thing as the assertion fallacy.² The dispute turns on what lessons we can draw from the fact that in certain examples it would be fishy or odd or puzzling to say that we know. One party in the dispute, I'll call them "saying philosophers", has it that those examples in which it would be odd to say we know aren't examples of knowledge or of knowing. The other party, I'll call them "meaning philosophers", agrees about the oddity but insists that the examples are still obviously examples of knowledge or of knowing and that what we say in those examples, fishy or not, is still true. I want here only to investigate this disagreement and to try and make some headway in providing support for the saying philosophers.

Let me back up a little bit. There are things that nowadays we philosophers, by and large, think of ourselves as knowing. These things strike us as, by and large, down home kinds of things, as rather uncontroversial bits of knowledge. We, most of us, know our own names. As we stare at trees or at other people or at our own hands or into our refrigerators, and there's nothing around to cloud our vision or our judgement, we know that that's a tree, that there's another person, that here is one hand, that there're plenty of beers to go around. And if we're interested in figuring out what knowledge is, these uncontroversial bits of knowledge look like clear starting points for our inquiry. But now a funny thing happens when we test the idea that we know these things against examples of what we would say when. In examples of non-philosophical conversations in which there's nothing around to cloud our vision or our judgement, we find that we don't very often say that we know these things. What's more, we find that if we did say we know these things in those examples they'd be very weird things to say. When we compare the weird examples with examples in which we would, quite naturally, say that we know these things, we might find that we want to worry whether in those weird examples we can even make sense of our saying we know. We might worry about whether those weird examples should even be counted as examples of knowledge. Or maybe not. We might want to hold our ground and insist, in the face of the fact that the examples are weird, that we can, from on high perhaps, describe them as examples of knowledge even if none of the characters in the examples would say they know. It's to these two very different ways of thinking that we owe this dispute.

It'll help first off to give the sort of weird example on which the dispute turns.

Let's say that you and I are strolling through the woods chatting about the weather or some other nothing in particular. Shortly we come across a stand of huge trees and we pull up and stop next to one in particular, the largest of the bunch. Now suppose I turn to you in the midst of our conversation and say, quite out of the blue, while pointing at the tree "I know that that's a tree". Nothing led up to it and

nothing follows from it. It's very much a surprise visitor in our conversation. I simply say, "I know that that's a tree". It's not dark. I have my glasses on. Fog hasn't rolled in to cloud things up. And yet I say, "I know that that's a tree". Both the saying philosophers and the meaning philosophers agree that I have said something terribly odd or fishy or puzzling. And it's pretty clear that they are, both of them, right about this.

But now the saying philosophers claim that, in addition to being fishy, what I've said is unintelligible. The way to account for the fishiness of what I've said is that it's unintelligible, not to be made sense of, not to be understood, on the hinterlands (if not in the capital city) of Just Plain Wacky.³ You, in the example, will of course be hard pressed to make heads or tails of what I've said. You will have to wonder, if you are to make sense of it, whether maybe I've been taking some sort of hallucinogen or whether my eyes are playing tricks on me. But if none of this is so, you'll be at a complete loss to figure out why in the world I would have said such a thing and what in the world I could have been saying in saying it.

The meaning philosophers, on the other hand, take the following line. Fishy?, sure. Odd?, of course. Puzzling?, Nutty?, Wacky?, Bizarre?, yes. But what I said still is intelligible. It makes sense. It 'means' something and, besides, it's true. Even obviously so.⁴ They take it that here is a clear case of knowledge and that the reason what I said in the example sounds so bizarre is simply because it's so very obviously true that it isn't worth mentioning. You, in the example, needn't try and think whether maybe I'm freaked out on psychedelics or having a mental collapse in order to see what I'm up to in saying "I know that that's a tree". I'm just saying something true. "I know that that's a tree" is true, so it must be that I know that that's a tree. Simple as that. Saying it in the example certainly is inappropriate, but still it's true.

This is the dispute. And I can't help but think that the stakes in settling it are high. There are a great many things that philosophers are given to saying which fail to find homes in examples outside of philosophy in just the way that's at issue here. Philosophers, by and large, (saying philosophers excepted) are inclined to see as examples of knowledge examples in which it surely would be fishy at best to say, from within the example, that we know. Sitting at my computer just now I am alleged to know that I'm typing, that I'm listening to music, that it's coming on noon, and so on. I surely wouldn't say, sitting here at my computer just now, that I know these things. And if I did, surely these would be odd things to say. It's thinking that I do know these things even so that leads philosophers to think of these as good and upstanding cases of knowing and, often, to then base their analyses of knowing on them.

This way of carrying on happens when philosophers think about knowledge, but it also happens when they think about other things. When thinking about language there's a temptation to think that when other folks talk to us we quite generally, certain problematic cases aside, understand what they say, that they mean something in saying what they say, that we mean something in saying what we say, that our words refer. When thinking about the mind there's a temptation to think quite generally that we are conscious, that there is something it's like to see hill or dale or red, that we believe a whole lot of things and that we intend a whole lot of others. These temptations run strong despite the fact that it's only in very particular examples that we would ever actually say any of these things. "I understand what you said.", "I mean something.", "I'm referring to.", "I'm conscious!", "there's something it's like to.", "I believe that.", "I intend to.". Not just any old examples will do.

Now if these things are true, obviously true, in the way that meaning philosophers suggest, then we can, of course, go on with business as usual -- the business of spelling out what it is to know things, to understand what others say to us, to mean what we say, to be conscious, for there to be something-it's-like to paint the town red and then look, to believe things and to intend them. But if the saying philosophers are right then the philosophical positions about what these things are come into question, since even the claims that there are such things are unintelligible when they are whisked away from those examples in which we would say them. But then so do the very questions that lead to those positions, since the questions are questions that take for granted the existence of those things alleged to live and breathe quite apart from examples of what we would say when.

What I want to do now is investigate these two positions. I'll start with the saying philosophers. And I'd like to start by considering a passage from Wittgenstein. ⁵

"I know that that's a tree." Why does it strike me as if I did not understand the sentence? Though it is after all an extremely simple sentence of the most ordinary kind. As soon as I think of an everyday use of the sentence instead of a philosophical one, its meaning becomes clear and ordinary. (1969, §347)

I can't help but read Wittgenstein in this passage as in sympathy with the saying philosophers. Surely if he's not endorsing the view that such a sentence as "I know that that's a tree" as it's said in the example above is unintelligible, he's at least raising the possibility that it's unintelligible, or that it's unintelligible to him. But what's interesting is the last part of the passage in which he tells us what happens when he contrasts everyday examples in which we'd ordinarily say we know with examples in which saying we know is a surprise visitor. ⁶ I'm not sure what Wittgenstein has in mind in talking about the 'uses' of sentences or of 'context'. But if he simply means examples in which we say things, then I think I can see what he's driving at. It has always seemed to me that setting out an array of examples in which we would say we know and then contrasting those with the examples in which it would be fishy to say we know is exactly what's needed if we're to look and see the possibility that there be nonsense running amok in the latter. So I'll do that now.

Lets say that you and I are, once again, in the woods, that we're by that stand of trees, that we're parked next to the biggest of them all, that I haven't yet said and I don't ever say "I know that that's a tree". Instead, we spy, off on one side of the trail, a small scrubby looking thing not three feet high. I ask you, "What sort of plant is that?" And I start poking around at it, thinking, perhaps, that'll help me settle my question. But you're more cautious in your investigations and so you pluck off a small branch, settle onto a rock, and start in at keying with your trusty Jepson Manual. I'm still poking around at it when you tap me on the shoulder and say, "It's a tree. An immature Oak in fact." I'm defiant. "This is a tree?!? It can't be, it's too small to be a tree and besides." You, thankfully, persist. "Look, Jeff, I know it's a tree, I just got done keying the damned thing."

Here's an example in which you say you know. It's not at all odd or fishy or puzzling. Something certainly led up to it. I was defiant and you'd done your keying. And something certainly follows from it. I now stand corrected. Maybe even a bit more humble for all that. Here's another example.

Let's say that shortly after The Shrub/Tree Incident and brief bouts, on my part, of feeling a little bit like an idiot, I decide to make a joke. We're still there by the stand of trees (they are, after all, well

worth hanging around) and so I point to the biggest of the bunch and say "Well, I certainly know that that's a tree."

Here's an example in which I say I know. Again, it isn't odd or fishy or puzzling. Again, something led up to it. I'd made myself look like a fool and felt, probably, a little bad about it. I wanted to make a joke. Again, something follows from it. You, maybe, laugh even though it's a pretty bad joke. I think I'm absolved. And we go on our way. And now contrast these examples with the first.

There we are in the woods. We haven't spied the immature oak and become curious. I haven't been rebuked. We aren't practising at keying plants nor, for that matter, are we bandying jokes. We're talking of clouds thankfully dispersed and of sunlight now spilling delightfully through the canopy -- until, that is, I point to the big tree next to us and say "I know that that's a tree".

And what about that? I have to confess that I have no clue what I could be saying in saying such a thing. I want to agree with Wittgenstein. I don't understand what I've said here. And unless I try and import some of the details from those other two examples above, I feel forced to say that what I said can't be understood. Of course none of the details from the examples above are present here. And it's important that they're not. If they were, the example wouldn't be the example it is. Saying in the example "I know that that's a tree" would then make sense. This is the only way I know how to put it. So far it doesn't make sense, and because of that it's hard to see how it could be an example of knowing.

How should we account for this? Here's another bit from Wittgenstein. It follows right on the heels of that last section.

Just as the words "I am here" have a meaning only in certain contexts, and not when I say them to someone who is sitting in front of me and sees me clearly, -- and not because they are superfluous, but because their meaning is not determined by the situation, yet stands in need of such determination. (1969, §348)

Here we have a passage that we might want to think of as an attempt to spell out what's gone wrong in the wacky example, as an attempt to say what puts the "wacky" in the wacky example. Now I should confess I'm not sure quite what to make of Wittgenstein's talk of 'meaning' or of 'context' here, or of his suggestion that 'meaning is determined' in some way or other by 'situations'. Still I think I might be able to see what he's driving at. In order to do it, though, I need to keep focussed on detailed examples. Wittgenstein's remark suggests a few that might help.

Suppose we are out together shopping for the holidays. We go our separate ways in a huge department store. Soon enough you've found a gift you think is just right for a friend of ours. Before you buy it you want to find out whether I think so too. You start to hunt me down. I said I'd be in Kitchenware, so you head over that way. In the meantime I'm tucked away in a corner with my head buried in a new coffee maker thinking it might just make a good present for me. It's no surprise you can't find me. Eventually, you call out, though not too loud, "Hey Jeff! You here?" No response. You give it another try. This time, from over in the corner, you hear me say "I'm over here". You turn and look and there I am flagging you down. That's one example. Here's another.

Let's say I meet you for coffee and after we talk awhile you keep on talking and talking. I lose interest. I drift off and start thinking about other things all together. Soon enough it's obvious I'm not

listening anymore. You say, "Hey Jeff, are you there?" "Yeah," I say. "I'm here. I was just thinking." I say this, of course, knowing full well that there are some holes I won't be able to dig myself out of.

But now contrast those examples with this one.

We're once again sitting across from one another talking over coffee. I haven't drifted off and you certainly aren't looking for me. We're talking to one another about nothing in particular. And now, just after saying how I hope it doesn't get much colder this winter, I blurt out "I'm here." This example looks to be in the same shape as our other wacky example. I'm not sure how to make sense of what I said. And why? Well for starters, as with our other wacky example, the sorts of details in the non-wacky examples, the details which seem to keep the sayings in them on the up and up, are notably absent. Those details look like they're important somehow. Maybe this is what Wittgenstein has in mind in suggesting "situations determine meaning" -- if that even is what he's suggesting. If so, I'm not sure why he wants to put it in quite that way.

Part of what goes into your saying you know in the shrub/tree example is that I was defiant, that I doubted that the tree was a tree even after you told me so. Another part of what goes into your saying you know in that example is that you had done your keying. Parts of what goes into my saying I know in absolving myself and making my bad joke is that there even ever was The Shrub/Tree Incident, that I was defiant for no good reason and now realise my mistake. Ignorance is hard to swallow. Maybe I want to get even. "So there." Part of what goes into my saying I'm here in the department store example is that you're looking for me, calling out and hoping I'll respond. Part of what goes into saying I'm here in the Other Things On My Mind example is that I've drifted off, that I've quit responding. The list, of course, goes on and on.

Without the right kinds of details, saying I know doesn't make sense. With the right kinds of details, it does. Now it's certainly right to suspect that the different sorts of examples in which we sensibly say we know will go on and on. These two, that is, aren't alone. And I expect that the details that go into saying we know in those other examples will be very different. Maybe there will even be as many different details as there are examples, or more. Maybe not. That requires cooking up the examples and then looking and seeing. But to put it very strongly, examples in which we sensibly say we know are probably the best evidence for supposing that we have before us examples in which we know or, to put it another way, examples of knowledge.⁷ And if the details are an important part of those examples in which we sensibly say we know, it's hard to think that the details aren't important to examples of knowing. I think, in any event, that I'm in keeping with saying philosophers in supposing that they are important.

Now where do we stand? The saying philosophers have it that examples in which it'd be odd or wacky or puzzling or fishy to say "I know" or "he knows" or "she knows" or "we know" and so on and on are rather examples of nonsense than examples of knowing. That's why they're odd or fishy or puzzling. They have it that examples of knowing are very messy things, strewn about with peculiar details that are nonetheless details requisite to there being examples of knowing. Along with seeing this comes the thorny realisation that if what we wanted was a general account of knowledge or of knowing, well then it's back to the drawing board. Knowing comes to very different things depending on which example of knowing we're interested in.

Now I should like to spend some time investigating the meaning philosophers' position. Here's

another bit from Wittgenstein.

Do I know that I am now sitting in a chair?--Don't I know it?! In the present circumstances no one is going to say that I know this; but no more will he say, for example, that I am conscious. Nor will one normally say this of passers-by in the street. But now, even if one doesn't say it, does that make it untrue?? (1969, §552)

This gives us a helpful way to motivate the meaning philosophers' position. It's in the face of this sort of consideration that we find ourselves tempted to think that it matters not a whit whether or not we would say we know in figuring out whether 'in fact' we know. I wouldn't say "I know that that's a tree" in examples lacking the right kinds of details. Sitting here at my computer just now I wouldn't say "I know that I'm sitting in a chair". And granted, should I say these things out of the blue they'd be very weird things to say. But just because I wouldn't say them or even just because my saying them would be weird, it doesn't follow from that that I don't know these things. Saying we know and knowing are two very different things. I know these things even if I wouldn't say I know them. Even if saying I know these things would be odd, it's still true that I know them.

Here are a few more passages from Wittgenstein.

I may tell someone "this colour is called 'red' in English" (when for example I am teaching him English). In this case I should not say "I know that this colour." -- I would perhaps say that if I had just now learned it, or by contrast with another colour whose English name I am not acquainted with. (1969, §530)

But now isn't it correct to describe my present state as follows: I know what this colour is called in English? And if that is correct, why then should I not describe my state with the corresponding words "I know etc."? (1969, §531)

So when Moore sat in front of a tree and said "I know that that's a tree", he was simply stating the truth about his state at the time. (1969, §532)

If I'm right that Wittgenstein is giving voice in these passages to the sort of view that meaning philosophers hold, their view starts to look clearer. Meaning philosophers picture my saying "I know that that's a tree" over here and my knowing that that's a tree over there. Saying "I know that that's a tree" is one thing--something that may well require the sorts of details saying philosophers talk about in order to come off, to avoid Wackydome. But my knowing that that's a tree is another thing all together. My knowing that that's a tree is something that I describe in saying "I know that that's a tree". It's perhaps a 'state', as Wittgenstein says. And though it may be inappropriate in certain examples to describe myself in that way, by saying "I know that that's a tree", it still is true that I know that that's a tree. Facts are facts, after all, whether or not it's appropriate to mention them. But what gives 'meaning' to my words "I know that that's a tree" is what my words describe, the fact that I know that that's a tree. My words, "I know that that's a tree", are 'meaningful'. So they aren't at all nonsense, as the saying philosophers would have us think. They are descriptions. And since they describe the fact that I know that that's a tree, they are true. ⁸

I think that this is an important part of the picture that's guiding the meaning philosophers in thinking the way that they do. This picture leads them to think that the saying philosophers have made a

very profound and a very basic mistake. Saying philosophers mistake saying we know for the Real McCoy, for what it 'means' to say we know, namely, that we know or our knowing. Saying philosophers think that paying attention to examples in which we would say that we know are important simply because they think that saying we know has something important to do with knowing. But, of course, saying we know and knowing are very different. We surely know even though in certain examples we wouldn't say so. Those examples are still examples of knowing, despite what the saying philosophers would have us think. This is the best of what I can make of the meaning philosophers' position.

In his book *Speech Acts*, John Searle takes up the view of the meaning philosophers and works hard to argue against the saying philosophers. Searle thinks that saying philosophers commit a particular sort of fallacy, the 'assertion fallacy', in claiming that saying "I know that that's a tree" in our weird example is nonsense or is not to be understood, and that it's not an example of knowing. Searle agrees with the saying philosophers that saying out of the blue "I know that that's a tree" is odd, fishy, what have you. But his explanation of this is not that it's nonsense. Rather, Searle thinks "the reason it would be odd to say such things is that they are too obvious to be worth saying" (1969, p.141). It's obviously true for Searle that if I'm staring straight at a huge tree and nothing is around to cloud my vision or my judgment, I know that that's a tree. The misstep that Searle thinks saying philosophers make, the assertion fallacy, is the misstep of "confusing the conditions for the performance of the speech act of assertion with the analysis of the meaning of particular words occurring in certain assertions." (1969, p.141)

I want to see what Searle has in mind here, but I'm afraid if I do it I'll have to try and do it without getting bogged down in certain of his terms of art. I'm not sure what exactly Searle has in mind when he talks of 'conditions for the performance of the speech act of assertion' or, for all that, of 'the meaning of particular words occurring in certain assertions'. Maybe he thinks that saying philosophers are mistaken in supposing that the details important to examples in which we sensibly say we know are important to knowing in those examples or to what knowing comes to in those examples. Certainly Searle thinks, along with the meaning philosophers, that whether or not in certain examples I would say that I know hasn't all that much to do with whether or not in those examples I do know. Searle thinks, in other words, that knowing and saying we know are very different. So I guess I can see why he would think saying philosophers are confused in thinking that knowing has quite a bit to do with examples in which we say we know, and with the details in those examples that lead up to and follow our saying we know. If this is what he has in mind, I think he's right that saying philosophers think such a thing. But now I'd like to have a look at his reasons for saying it's a mistake or a confusion to think such a thing.

Searle provides us with precious few reasons for supposing that there is such a thing as the assertion fallacy. Here are a couple of them. I'll say as I go whether I think his arguments are any good and why.

Searle asks us to consider whether the negations of the things saying philosophers think are nonsense would be nonsense if we were to say them in similar sorts of examples.² In the wacky "I know that that's a tree" example, I simply said, out of the blue, "I know that that's a tree". Searle wants us to ask what would happen if I said out of the blue, "I don't know that that's a tree". Let's have a look at that example.

Here we are again, standing by a huge tree and talking about nothing in particular or about

dreadful wind and rain. But now I start to pat the tree steadily and, maybe, to the rhythm of my pats I say to you out of the blue, "I don't know that that's a tree". Pardon?

Searle thinks that in this example what I said, "I don't know that that's a tree", is obviously false. And he is inclined to generalise. The negations of what saying philosophers think are bits of nonsense are obviously false. We only need to do our logic to see that since these negations are obviously false, their negations are obviously true. Since saying "I don't know that that's a tree" in the example above is obviously false, saying "I know that that's a tree" would be obviously true. That's one of Searle's arguments for his view that saying philosophers have made a mistake.

In order to show that saying philosophers are mistaken, Searle tries to show that saying "I know that that's a tree" in the wacky example is not nonsense. Searle tries to show that it's obviously true. The way that he tries to show this is by claiming that the negation of what I've said in the wacky example is obviously false. But now has he shown this? No.

Searle simply begs the question against saying philosophers. Searle takes for granted that in the example in which I say "I don't know that that's a tree" what I've said is obviously false. But the saying philosophers will remind him that what I've said here is in the same pickle as what I said when I said "I know that that's a tree". The saying philosophers have it that both examples are examples of nonsense. Searle must not see what it is the saying philosophers are up to. In worrying that in our wacky example saying "I know that that's a tree" is nonsense, the saying philosophers aren't worrying that maybe I don't know that that's a tree. The saying philosophers wouldn't think it clear in the example what to make of my saying either "I know that that's a tree" or "I don't know that that's a tree". In working to point out that "I don't know that that's a tree" is obviously false, Searle smuggles in the very assumption at issue. That assumption is the assumption that we can make sense of knowing or not knowing apart from examples in which we would ordinarily say we know or that we don't know. Searle thinks we can. It's because Searle thinks "I know that that's a tree" is obviously true, that I know that that's a tree, that he sees knowledge in this example. This is why he thinks my saying "I don't know that that's a tree" is obviously false. But in thinking this way he relies on the very thing he wants to show.

Another argument Searle gives to support his view that saying philosophers are mistaken helps us to see more clearly what underlies this disagreement between saying philosophers and meaning philosophers. Searle asks us to consider some certain other sentences that would be odd or "fishy to say in a great many examples. The sentences he has in mind are of the following sort. "He is breathing", "He has five fingers on his left hand", or, I suppose, "That is a tree" or "Here is a hand". Searle has it that these would be odd or fishy things to say in 'normal' examples. But simply on the basis of this it would be a mistake to suppose that the details of the examples in which we would say such things are important to figuring out what breathing is or what fingers are or what trees or hands are. He is inclined to generalise and think that it's a mistake in the same sort of way to suppose that the details of the examples in which we would say we know are important to figuring out what knowing is. ¹⁰

Searle must not see what's at issue. Here again he takes for granted the very thing he needs to show. In order to think Searle's argument is any good, we have to assume that saying we know is anything at all like saying that's a tree or we have hands or we're breathing. "We're breathing", "that's a tree", and "here is a hand", Searle imagines, state facts which are there whether or not we say so. He imagines that "I know" does the same. "I know" states some fact which is there whether or not we say

so. But whether this is so is the question that the saying philosophers have, at the very least, raised. It's the question that makes this dispute go. In taking for granted his answer to it, Searle guarantees his results. He thinks it's obviously true that I know that that's a tree. He thinks it's obviously true because he, along with the meaning philosophers, pictures saying we know as a description of something. Saying we know is a description of the fact that we know. Searle sees the weird examples in which we say we know as examples of knowledge not because they are examples of knowledge or because there is knowledge in them to be seen, but because this picture requires him to.

But isn't this picture right? That's a tough question. I'd like to put it aside for now. I'd also like to bring this discussion to an end. But before I do I want to quote a sort of confession from Frank Ebersole. In this quote Ebersole is trying hard to make out why it is we might be tempted to think in the way that meaning philosophers do. In making that out he spells out the picture that's in question. So it might be helpful for us to hear.

I think of language in terms of stating facts. The exemplar use of language is given by the "World Almanac and Book of Facts." Or by the sentence from the logical theory textbook: "the cat is on the mat." The sentence is the instrument for stating facts. A fact can be expressed by a sentence even though the sentence is never spoken or written. A sentence may lie in a dormant state waiting for the proper circumstances to come along when it can be put to use. But also, it may be used in quite improper circumstances, as when I blurt out "That's a fireplug."

And this is supported by the idea I have of words as units which join together to form sentences. Each word in a sentence has its own meaning, and these meanings combine to produce the "content" of the sentence, or its "proposition". And the meanings that words have are steadfast, and stay with their words in and out of the many different sentences in which the words appear. This incorporates what is perhaps the most misleading part of this misleading picture of language: the idea that there is a certain something which each word has, that something called its "meaning". (1996, p.7)

Part of what's valuable in the saying philosophers' worries about the possibility of our talking nonsense is, at least, that they raise a question about whether it's right to think of knowing and saying we know as very different sorts of things. We are now faced, thanks to saying philosophers, with worrying about whether it's right to simply assume that the meaning philosophers' picture is right. Saying philosophers caution us against letting this picture dictate to us which examples are examples of knowing and which aren't. They caution us against seeing knowledge in examples where saying we know might wind up being bits of nonsense in disguise rather than obvious truths.

In doing philosophy we often take for granted the existence of the very things we study. We often take it for granted that there are such things, that there are such 'facts', as knowing, as believing, as understanding, as being conscious, as meaning what we say. We think these things are terribly mysterious, that they are crying out to be explained. This leads us to ask, What is Knowledge?, What is Believing?, What is Understanding?, What is Consciousness?, What is Meaning?. These questions spawn others. And we work all-the-live-long-day to answer them. And we fight hard to defend our answers. But now if there's the slightest possibility that we are lead, from the get go, to think in this way, that there are such 'facts' that need explaining, merely because of an overly simplistic or a misleading picture of language, well then that's something for us to worry about. We owe it to saying philosophers for having discovered this possibility. Sorting through examples in order to see whether we might have taken too

much for granted in setting up our problems certainly makes our work much harder. But I have come to think that, whatever its results, doing this work at all is a kind of progress.

Jeff Johnson
University of Minnesota

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Notes

1. See, for example, Wittgenstein 1969, §§10, 237, 347-350, 372, 461, 526 as compared to §§397, 423, 431, 451, 466, 531-533, 552.
2. See Searle 1969, pp.141-146. Another, similar, critique of saying philosophers can be found in Paul Grice's work on 'conversational implicature'.
3. There are threads of this position in Wittgenstein 1953 & 1969, and throughout the work done by John Austin, Oets Bouwsma, and Frank Ebersole, among others.
4. For a discussion of this position with respect to the claim that "I know that here is one hand" and other such said quite out of the blue are obviously true, see Moore 1962, "A Defense of Common Sense", pp.32-59, "Proof of an External World", pp.126-148, and "Certainty", pp.223-246.
5. In leaning on Wittgenstein here I want to try and avoid as much as I can issues about what Wittgenstein was *really* saying, and issues about who, in Wittgenstein's work, is really Wittgenstein and who is merely the interlocutor. To that end I'll take it for granted that the right answer to questions about what Wittgenstein is really saying is that Wittgenstein is saying just exactly what he says, even where what he says conflicts with other things he says.
6. I suppose the distinction between 'philosophical use' and 'everyday use' bears some spelling out. As I'm inclined to picture it, the philosophical use of a sentence is the sort of use to which meaning philosophers are inclined to put it-as though we could lean back in our armchairs and generate lists of those alleged uncontroversial bits of knowledge, of those things we are supposed to know though should we say them out of the blue and out of our armchairs in the course of everyday (non-philosophical) conversations they're sure to lead to furrowed brows. This is importantly in contrast to everyday examples in which we would quite naturally say we know and should there be furrowed brows well then by god they're not there because we said we knew. Of course I need to do more with this, but I'll leave it for another time.
7. I'm tempted here to say something even stronger-that if we should have to say knowing is anything at

all, knowing just is saying we know. But I need to be careful about saying such a thing.

8. There are a great many puzzles in this picture that're important to think about, but for lack of time and space I'll pass over them for now.

9. Ibid. p.145.

10. Ibid. p.143.

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